

Office of the Governor

BOB RILEY
Governor

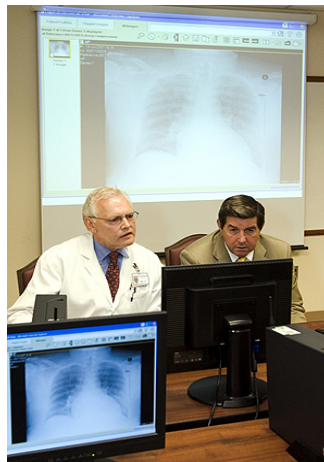


Press Office

STATE OF ALABAMA

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Governor Riley Sees Health Technology in Action



Gov. Riley views the image of an x-ray on a computer as Dr. Glenn Bedsole demonstrates Jackson Hospital's electronic health information system.



Gov. Riley speaks about Medicaid's plans to create a statewide electronic health information network that will improve patient care and lower health care costs.

Network to Link Medicaid with Doctors and Health Agencies Across the State

MONTGOMERY - Governor Bob Riley visited Jackson Hospital Tuesday to see how physicians and hospitals are using technology to improve patient care.

The Governor's visit comes as the Alabama Medicaid Agency is working to create an electronic health information network that will link Medicaid with doctors, health care providers, state health agencies and private payers across the state. Medicaid is using a two-year \$7.6 million federal grant for the project, which Governor Riley announced the state had received in January.

"This network will provide doctors with real-time access to individual health information like immunization records, prescription data and lab results. It will reduce the potential for medical errors, support our efforts to improve the quality of health care people receive, and allow our health care system to increase efficiency and decrease costs," Governor Riley said.

Jackson Hospital Dr. Glenn Bedsole showed Governor Riley how physicians using the hospital's electronic health information system can view lab results, x-ray images and medical information online to enhance patient care.

Dr. Jerry Harrison, a family physician from Haleyville, demonstrated an electronic health record system used in his practice that not only documents medical information, but provides reminders and other data to make sure every patient visit is thorough and complete without duplicating tests or other services.

"Both demonstrations illustrate the value of investing in technology. Technology and health care are natural partners. Physicians and other medical providers can use technology to access data that reduces duplication and improves patients' overall health," Governor Riley said. "With good information, patients' health care needs can be addressed better and more effectively."

But doctors don't always receive accurate information about their patients in a timely manner. Lab results may get lost or delayed. Patients might forget to tell new doctors all the medicines they have been prescribed by other doctors. And in an emergency, patients may not even be able to communicate information at all or have access to it.

Governor Riley said that happened during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when thousands of evacuees arrived in Alabama without their prescription medicine or medical records.

"The state and Medicaid recognize that when medical providers have secure access to key health information, patients benefit. Taxpayers also benefit because we're able to deliver higher quality health care in the most efficient and economical way possible," Governor Riley said.

The Alabama Medicaid Agency is currently evaluating proposals from seven vendors interested in developing and pilot testing a clinical support tool that will ultimately provide health professionals with secure access to individual health information, claims, immunization records, prescription data and lab results. The clinical support tool will also make possible a variety of quality improvement efforts aimed at increasing efficiency, decreasing costs and making measurable improvements in the quality of care offered.

For more contact information, visit Governor Bob Riley's Web Site: <http://www.governor.alabama.gov/>
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